

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF FORT WAYNE

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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

OF FORT WAYNE

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by

ALBERT F. DISERENS

BLACK GOLD

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF FORT WAYNE

There were, in successive order, five types of people who inhabited the area which is now Fort Wayne. There were first the Indians, who were attracted by the quiet streams abounding with fish and the forests rich in game. There were next the explorers, who were led by the search for a new route to the Mississippi, and thus hoped to achieve greater glory for themselves and for the King for whom they were working. Then there were the priests, whose object was the redemption of souls. After them came the traders, who had an eye to the wealth to be gained from furs and pelts in the wilderness. And finally came the settlers, when the trail had been blazed, and trading posts and missions had been established.

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The first French fort in this area was built in 1682, and stood just north of the present Nickel Plate tracks on the east bank of the St. Mary's River. At that time, of course, Indians roamed the area, although no definite Indian village had yet been set up.

Shortly after the establishment of this fort, the village of Kekionga was founded. This was the real precursor of the city of Fort Wayne. It stood in the present Lakeside, just north of the eastern end of the Lakeside bridge. Thus for nearly a century prior to the American Revolution, there was a village here.

The last French fort, standing about where Delaware Avenue runs into the St. Joe River, was built in 1750. In 1760 it was taken over by the British.

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In September, 1794, Anthony Wayne, General in the United States Army, came to the junction of the rivers, and built a fort which was completed October 22, 1794, and which was christened Fort Wayne. This, then, is the birthday of Fort Wayne. The fort stood about 300 feet south of the present Old Fort Park.

General Wayne left this area less than a week after the fort had been completed. Six years later, in 1800, a second American fort was built. This is the fort which stood on the site of the present Old Fort Park, north of the first fort. For a time in 1800 both forts existed, but the earlier one was soon abandoned.

From the completion of the second fort in 1800 until its evacuation and abandonment as a military stronghold on April 19, 1819 - another important date in Fort Wayne's history - this area was still primarily of military importance, and very few persons were attracted here except those who had connections with the military.

In 1819 some of our important pioneer settlers came here. One of these was Samuel Hanna, who, more than any other man in Fort Wayne history, has led in the development of the town, in bringing to it facilities it might not otherwise have had, and in doing much for its civic betterment. He came here from Kentucky, as did many other pioneers. Also beginning to come here at this time were settlers from New York State, from Pennsylvania, from Ohio, and in less degree, from Virginia. These people were mostly of English, Scotch, or Scotch-Irish descent. They gave this area its early character, that of the hardy, hard-working, God-fearing pioneer, who was willing to make sacrifices for the future, in order that this community might grow and prosper.

Not until the fifties and sixties did the character of the incoming pioneers deviate, in general, from this norm.

The first post office was established here in 1820. This was a recognition at last, by the United States Government, that there was really a community here, which needed to be served as were the other established communities east of here, and in some cases west and south of here.

In 1822 the platting of Fort Wayne was undertaken. The district that was platted then consisted of Calhoun, Court, Clinton, and Barr streets running north and south, and Water (now Superior), Columbia, Main, Berry, and Wayne streets east and west. That was all there was of Fort Wayne in 1822, 132 years ago. These streets did not run exactly east and west and north and south. The early platters deviated from the true compass direction in order not to cut through houses that had already been erected, and which would have been in the path of the new streets. Later, Major Samuel Lewis, for whom Lewis Street is named, platted the new streets in a true east-west and north-south line. This is why the citizen of 1954 now notices the curve in Calhoun, Clinton, Harrison, and other streets just as those streets approach Lewis street in a southerly direction.

The original platters of Fort Wayne were two men named Barr and McCorkle, who never lived here, but who owned the original plat of 110 lots and sold them to eager purchasers. In September of 1829 Fort Wayne was incorporated as a town.

What of some of the factors in the growth of Fort Wayne after its establishment as a town? What of religion? Of education? Of Trans-

portation? Of banking facilities? All these matters were important to the early settlers, for they had a bearing on the accessions of additional population which came rapidly in the years 1830 to 1860.

Of religion let us see the origins. The first church of any denomination or faith to be established in this city was the First Presbyterian Church. It was founded July 1, 1831, in a building, hardly more than a shack, at the corner of Columbia and Harrison streets. Later in the same ^{decade} ~~year~~ the first Catholic Church was established. True, there had been Catholic priests who had visited the area in years past, but there had been no definitely established parish, and no church building, until late 1837. With the establishment of these two, Protestant and Catholic, religion secured a foot hold here, and the Methodists, Baptists, and other denominations soon followed.

What of transportation, both within and through the city? The canal was the first important mode of transportation, other than the wagons over the trails. The Wabash and Erie Canal was begun in 1832, first by construction of the old feeder canal, which ran from the St. Joe River, just below where old Robison Park later stood, to the site of the present Wayne Knitting Mills. The Canal proper followed the route of the present Nickel Plate Railroad. In 1835 it was opened from here to Huntington. In 1843 it was completed from Toledo to Lafayette, and in that year a tremendous celebration was held here, to commemorate the completion of the project. Naturally, this Canal lent stimulus to trade and commerce, and was a factor in the accretion of additional population to the city. Many of the ancestors of people active in Fort Wayne's civic life today, came here by canal boat after this project had been completed.

The first railroad was built during the years 1852-1856, the old Pittsburgh, Ft. Wayne and Chicago, precursor of the present Pennsylvania system. Samuel Hanna was a director of this railroad, and it ran through part of his property, for his land, with its home which still stands on East Lewis street, extended far to the south as well as in other directions. Naturally the coming of the railroad lent an additional stimulus to the business and trade of the city, and brought many new inhabitants, attracted by the natural resources of the place and by the fact that it was rapidly becoming the center of transportation, agriculture, and commerce of this area.

The first local transportation came in 1872, when horse cars began running from Main to Creighton on Calhoun, thence west to Fairfield, with another line running East from Calhoun on Wallace to Hanna. The land surrounding these lines was owned by the owners of the transportation company, and naturally their land became more valuable with the coming of the transportation, and additional settlements along the lines brought further revenue to them. In 1889 a line was begun from Calhoun and Superior to the Centlivre Brewery, and in 1892 the Lakeside line was started. In the year 1892, also, the lines were electrified, and the trolley car held sway (sometimes ⁱⁿ a literal sense) until 1940, when trolley busses began to succeed street cars. In 1947, the last street car ended its run, and electric and gasoline busses now furnish transportation.

In 1835 the branch bank of Indiana was established here, thus beginning Fort Wayne's banking history, which for 119 years has endured, although through many vicissitudes, until now we have two strong

national banks, and several substantial state banks or trust companies.

Education for some reason lagged in the early days. People learned at home, or those who could afford it set up private schools or hired tutors. Not until 1853 were free schools established, and not until 1857 were the first two modern (for those times) school buildings built; first the Clay School, at Washington and Clay, now torn down; and next the Jefferson Building, on the site of the present Jefferson Community Building at Fairfield and Jefferson.

A public library was established in 1893, and moved into its present building in 1904. Before that there had been a Workingmen's Institute library which flourished briefly.

All these factors--transportation, religion, education, banking facilities, library accommodation,--I mention because they grew as the town grew, and at the same time they were themselves partly the cause of additional growth of the town, because naturally people were attracted to a community which afforded them these features, in addition to splendid natural resources.

Just prior to and following the Civil War, Fort Wayne began to be infiltrated in increasingly large numbers by groups of immigrants from Europe. These people were partly from Ireland, but far more preponderantly from Germany. It is the people in this latter category who lent a definite change in the type of inhabitants to the growing city. These Germans were characteristic of those emigrating from that country in great numbers, to other places in the United States. Hardy, thrifty, religious, willing to work hard and to live well but wisely, they brought to Fort Wayne an accretion of good stock which mingled with the pioneer

stock that had settled here in the years before the Civil War. The Germans were from both Catholic and Lutheran parts of Germany, and the Catholic Germans lent a definite character to old St. Mary's Church, which even today is to some extent the stronghold of German Catholics in this city. But in even greater numbers came the Lutheran Germans, who gave character to St. Paul's church, and later the various Lutheran churches which grew out of it as the city extended its boundaries. Even as early as 1851, Henry Rudisill and other leading citizens arranged with German emigration authorities to send to Fort Wayne a group of Germans, to fill the need of a larger population to cultivate the soil and to carry on the trade of the region.

This entrance of the German element into Fort Wayne's population is the one single great factor in its population trends, from the establishment of the town. Dutiful citizens, deeply religious, with their willingness to work hard and be of service, their love of art and music and the theater, their love of good living and mild pleasure which can be expressed only by that untranslatable word "Gemütlichkeit," they have given a definite stamp to the community, which is maintained even today by their descendants.

Fort Wayne was incorporated as a city in 1840, when the first charter was issued.

Fort Wayne has always grown, as a study of the ten year census periods from 1830 to 1950 will show.

1830 --	300
1840 --	2,080
1850 --	5,382
1860 --	10,388



1870 --	17,718
1880 --	26,880
1890 --	35,393
1900 --	45,115
1910 --	63,933
1920 --	86,549
1930 --	114,946
1940 --	118,410
1950 --	133,607

In 1940, 94.1% of the population was native white; 3.7% foreign born white; and 2.1% Negro. Of the foreign born white, 43.7% were from Germany; 6.4% from Canada; 6.3% from Italy; 6.1% from England; 5.9% from Greece; 5.4% from Poland; 3.4% from Russia; 2.9% from Rumania; 2.5% from Switzerland; and 2% from Ireland; the rest from scattered countries in small percentages.

Figures released in October, 1952, reflecting the results of the 1950 census, show that 3,597 persons of the white race in Fort Wayne were born in foreign countries. Of these 1,187 were born in Germany and 296 in Canada. In third place are England and Wales, of which there are 278 natives living in Fort Wayne. Italy natives total 212.

Natives of Poland number 193 and of Russia, 132.

Others are: Asia, 89; Austria, 82; Ireland, 77; Rumania, 74; France, 67; Scotland and Hungary, 60 each; Sweden, 57; Mexico, 52; French Canada, 33; Netherlands, 30; Yugoslavia, 21; Czechoslovakia, 19; Denmark, 15; Lithuania, 14; Norway, 14; Finland, 7; and Northern Ireland, 1.

One hundred thirty persons were born in still other European countries, 54 were natives of other countries in the Western Hemisphere, and 81

were either not reported or natives of still some other country.

The number of Negroes in the city is now approxiamtely 7,500.

This community is primarily industrial and commercial, and is the trading center for a large agricultural area. It is the third largest city in Indiana, and its position in the northeast corner of Indiana makes it the center of a large area of northeastern Indiana, northwestern Ohio, and southern Michigan. World War II did not have an appreciable effect on this city or its general character, because large industries had already been established for many years, and they simply converted to war work and then reconverted in 1945 and 1946. In this respect we have been exceedingly fortunate, as compared with "mushroom growth" cities which had a war boom and later began to experience a collapse.

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